

RECORDS OF THE QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM,
LAUNCESTON

The Appearance of *Acridotheres tristis* Linne,
in Northern Tasmania

By

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Although the Indian Myna, *Acridotheres tristis* Linne, has been quite common on the mainland of Australia, especially about Melbourne, for many years, it has not previously been recorded in Tasmania.

On March 8th, 1955, a bird (QVM No. 1955 : 2 : 1) was brought to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, and was subsequently determined as *Acridotheres tristis*. The bird, a nestling, had been taken from a nest under the eaves of a house at Mayfield, a northern suburb of Launceston. It was one of a family of six or more, which had been occupying the nest for at least two years.

The presence of Indian Mynas was reported in the Hobart "Mercury" and Launceston "Examiner" on March 9th, and subsequently several verbal reports came to hand of these birds having previously been seen in Tasmania.

Mr. Ray Evans reported seeing them at "Wonder Valley", Scottsdale, in 1940.

Mr. H. J. King observed them on three separate occasions at Mayfield about three years ago.

H. B. Martin in letters to the Editor in the Launceston "Examiner" on Tuesday, 15th March, 1955, stated that over a period of two years he had frequently observed specimens in the Mayfield area.

Finally, in the files of the Queen Victoria Museum, a report from Fr. Ehrenheim, Blackwood Creek, was found. He says he saw them in September, 1951, at Cressy, and was quite positive of their identification.

There are no reports of their having been seen in Southern Tasmania during this period. About thirty years ago several pairs were brought to Hobart, but they neither survived nor bred. The last pair is reported to have died about twenty-five years ago. As this introduction was not recorded there is no check on actual dates or numbers. However, Mr. M. S. R. Sharland says none have been seen in the South since this first appearance.

It thus appears that the birds have been not uncommon in the North of the State for at least three years, but apparently occasional ones reached the north before even that time. Whether these were isolated individuals or whether they were small breeding colonies is not known. The nest at Mayfield is the first conclusive evidence of a colony having been established.

The question of how they came to Tasmania now arises. Did they fly across Bass Strait or were they accidentally or deliberately introduced on boats crossing the strait?

Although the length of the flight is certainly not beyond their capabilities, since these birds have such highly developed navigational abilities the likelihood of a direct flight is small unless it occurred accidentally as the result of a storm. It does not seem particularly likely that just aimless wandering would have brought them here.